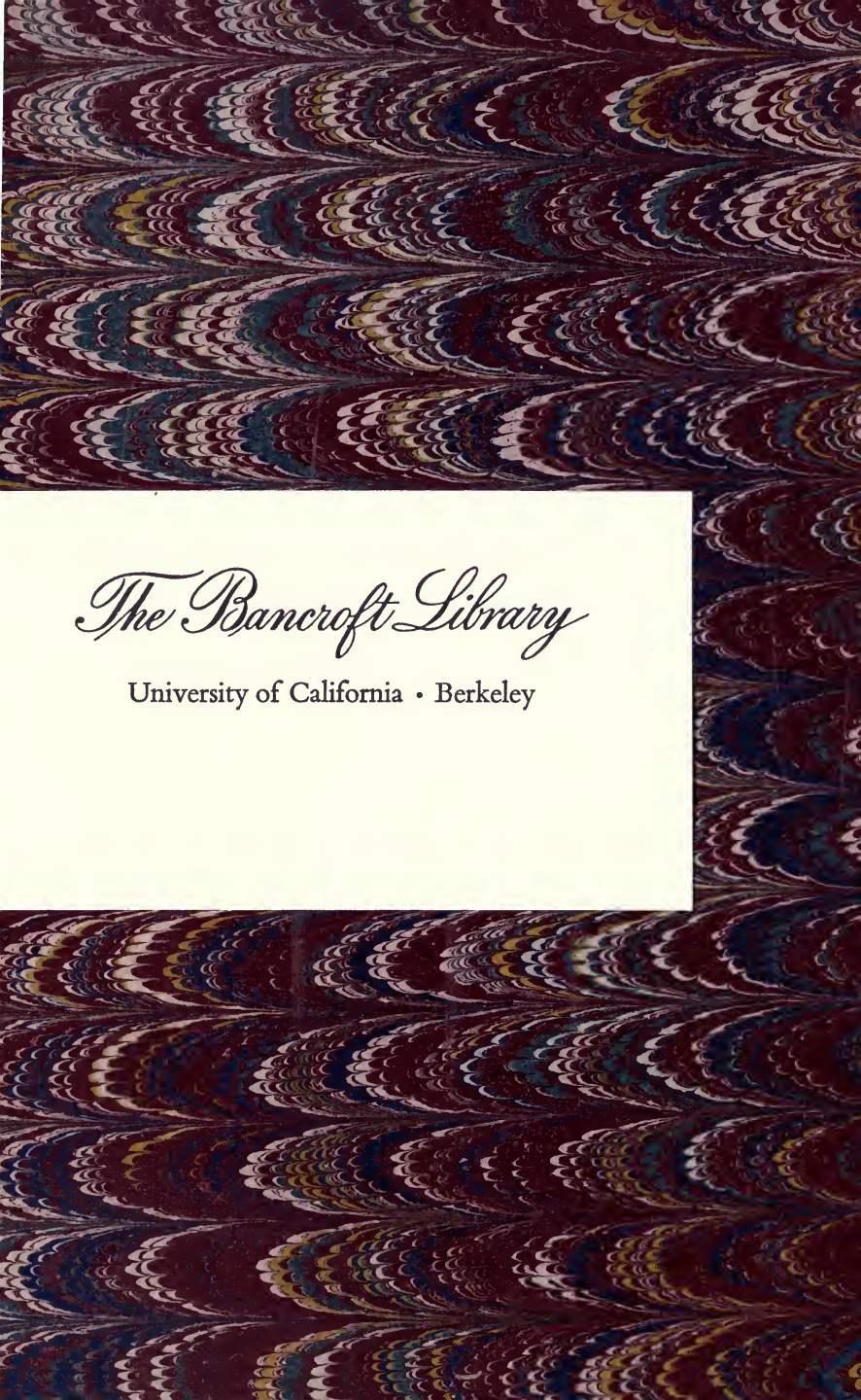
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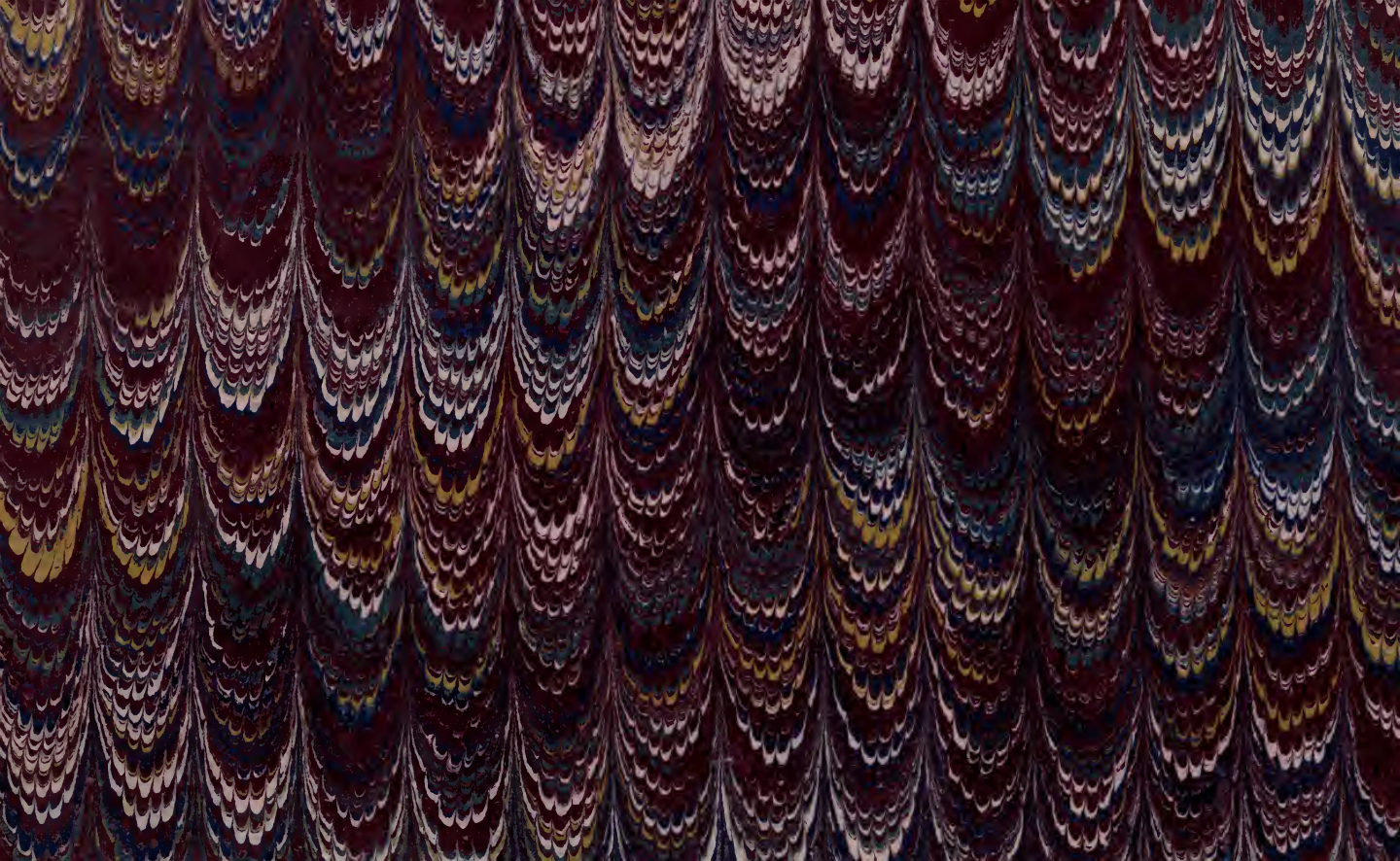

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The Didot Family.

Extracted from the forthcoming "Bibliography of Printing," compiled by E. C. Bigmore *and* C. W. H. Wyman.

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MDCCCLXXVIII.

The Didot Family.

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The Didot Family.

DIDOT (Ambroise Firmin). Alde Manuce et l'Hellénisme à Venise. Orné de quatre portraits et d'un facsimile. Hellénisme dans l'Occident; Isabelle D'Este, marquise de Mantoue; Correspondance inédite des Réfugiés Grecs en Italie; Zacharias Calliergi et les Calligraphes Crétois; Premières Impressions Grecques, etc. Paris: 1875. 8vo. pp. lxviii. and 647.

A monograph of Aldus Manutius, the great Italian printer of the sixteenth century, to whom the world of literature owes some of the best editions of the Greek classics, and the world of art some of the noblest examples of typography. It gives, further, a bibliographical and technical account of the products of the Aldine press from 1494 to 1515. In several respects it corrects the received opinions concerning the Aldi, and all its statements have been derived, after years of study and research on the part of the late M. A. F. Didot, from the best authorities. The ordinary text-books of the history of printing abound with errors on the subject, and these have been too often copied and perpetuated without the slightest attempt at verification. Prefixed to the work is a portrait of Aldus, taken from an Italian line engraving of great rarity which belonged to M. Didot's collection. This was reproduced, to illustrate an appreciative and lengthy review of the book, in the PRINTING TIMES AND LITHOGRAPHER (August, 1875), p. 167. At the side is the mark of Aldus—a dolphin entwined round an anchor, a device found on the obverse of a medal of Vespasian, and on another of Domitian. The great printer adopted the emblem as a token of swiftness (the dolphin) in execution, combined with steadiness (the anchor) in conception. There is also given a portrait of Isabella d'Este, the patron of Aldus, and of Marc Musurus; a view of the tomb of Prince Alberto Pio; and a facsimile of the caligraphy of Marc Musurus.—*See* MANUTIUS.

——— Les Alde Manuce. Paris: 1860. 8vo. pp. 15.

Excerpt from the "Nouvelle Biographie Générale," vol. i. p. 33.

——— Catalogue raisonné des Livres de la Bibliothèque de M. A. F. Didot. Paris: 1867. 8vo. pp. iv. and 384.

In the preface to the first part of the Catalogue of M. Didot's library ("livres à figures sur bois, solennités, romans de chevalerie") there is given a description of a series of books bearing on the history of printing, by reason of their em-

bellishment with engravings on wood, which serve also to settle some questions in the history of wood-engraving, which are raised in the essay prefixed to Vecellio's book on "Ancient Costumes."

DIDOT (Ambroise Firmin). Catalogue des Dessins et Estampes, composant la Collection de M. Ambroise Firmin Didot, de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres ; précédé d'introductions par M. Charles Blanc, de l'Académie Française, et M. Georges Duplessis, conservateur adjoint au Cabinet des Estampes. Paris : 1877. Royal 8vo. pp. vii. xxx. and 541.

The sale of the Didot engravings realized 626,474 fr., or £25,063 sterling.

——— Compte Rendu de l'ouvrage d'Aug. Bernard, "De l'Origine de l'Imprimerie en Europe. Paris : 1853. 8vo. pp. 20.

Excerpt from the *Athenæum Français* of 9th July, 1853.

——— Essai sur la Typographie. Paris : 1852. 8vo. Plates.

This work, an excerpt from the "Encyclopédie Moderne," contains the result of the author's lengthened experience, and of his vast theoretical and practical knowledge of the subject. The early history of printing is treated with great clearness and a thorough acquaintance with the best authorities.

——— Essai Typographique et Bibliographique sur l'Histoire de la Gravure sur Bois. Paris : 1863. 8vo. pp. 315.

This treatise on wood-engraving was prefixed to a sumptuous edition, published by Didot Frères, of Vecellio's "Costumes anciens."

——— Les Estienne. Henri I.; François I. et II.; Robert I., II., et III. ; Henri II. ; Paul et Antoine. Extrait de la "Nouvelle Biographie Générale." Paris. [1856.] 8vo. pp. 41.

——— Les Graveurs de Portraits en France. Paris : 1875–1877. 2 vols. 8vo. Vol. i. pp. iv. xvi. and 356 ; vol. ii. pp. iv. and 565. 750 copies printed.

A catalogue *raisonné* of the collection of portraits of the French school belonging to the late M. Didot. The work, which is posthumous, is preceded by an introduction dated December, 1875. The collection, which began with the portraits of printers and publishers, ended by comprising the notabilities in literature, science, and arts ; statesmen, magistrates, ecclesiastics, and generals. At M. Didot's death it had become the most important and interesting private portrait gallery in existence.

——— Gutenberg. Paris : 1858. 8vo. pp. 13.

This is a reprint of the article in the "Nouvelle Biographie Générale." M. Didot starts with the assertion that Gutenberg was the inventor of printing ; that he was born about 1400, at Mayence, where he died in February, 1468 ; and recites the principal events in the history of the famous controversy. He then traces the memorials of Gutenberg's career at Strasburg and at Mayence, and, after referring to the modern views which have been held of Gutenberg's invention, gives a bibliographical list of his works. At the end there is a long list of biographical treatises which refer to the subject of the memoir.

——— L'Imprimerie, la Librairie, et la Papeterie à l'Exposition Universelle de 1851. Rapport du 17 Jury. Paris : 1853. 8vo.——— 2me édition, avec quelques additions. Paris : 1854. 8vo.

——— L'Imprimerie à Paris en 1867. Paris : 1867.

An article in the first volume of the "Paris-Guide."

——— La Renaissance de l'Hellénisme et Alde Manuce. Paris : 1875. 8vo. pp. 38.

An extract from the *Revue de France.*

DIDOT (Ambroise Firmin). Réponses aux Questions soumises par MM. les membres de la Chambre du Commerce de Paris, sur la situation de la Librairie, de l'Imprimerie, de la Fonderie de Caractères, et de la Papeterie. Paris : 1831. 8vo. pp. 30.

——— La Société des Correcteurs. Paris: 1866. 8vo. pp. 27.

Ambroise Firmin-Didot, as honorary president, delivered this speech before the Paris Société des Correcteurs—the French Readers' Society, at their general assembly, on the 1st November, 1866. It deserves to be carefully read on account of the excellent advice it gives to the members of the profession, as well as the high estimate in which the calling of the Correctors of the Press was held by one who was so well qualified to form an opinion of its merits.

——— Société des Correcteurs. Discours prononcé le 19 Avril, 1868. Paris : 1868. 8vo. pp. 23.

DIDOT (Firmin). Caractères de la Fonderie de F. Didot. Paris : 1817. [A broadside.]

——— Fonderie de F. Didot, 1er cahier, contenant les caractères romains et italiques. Paris : 1828. 8vo.

DIDOT (Jules). Nouvelles Vignettes de la Fonderie de J. Didot l'aîné. Paris : 1836. 4to.

——— Vignettes et Caractères de la Fonderie de J. Didot l'aîné. Paris : 1837. Folio.

DIDOT (Pierre). Épître sur les Progrès de l'Imprimerie. Paris : 1784. 8vo. pp. 24.

The imprint runs: "Imprimé chez Didot l'aîné, avec les italiques de Firmin, son second fils." It is dedicated "À mon Père." The poem recites all the typographical successes of the author's father, to whom it is addressed, the expressions being of the most enthusiastic nature. At the end are certain notes on passages contained in the poem, and they have reference chiefly to the biographical, literary, and historical topics introduced. Incidentally, they give a good and authentic account of the first manufacture of the *papier vélin*. The poem is altogether very curious and interesting.

——— Épître sur les Progrès de l'Imprimerie. [Reprinted at the end of the "Essai de Fables nouvelles."] Paris : 1786. 8vo.

This contains, among other interesting matter, notes on the "typometer," Anisson's press, and the manufacture of satin paper.

——— Lettre sur les Découvertes de M. Didot (aîné) dans les Arts de l'Imprimerie, de la Gravure des Caractères, et de la Papeterie. Paris : 12th June, 1783. 8vo. pp. 15.

——— Spécimen des nouveaux Caractères de la Fonderie et de l'Imprimerie de P. Didot l'aîné, chevalier de l'ordre royal de St. Michel, imprimeur du roi et de la Chambre des Pairs. Dédié à Jules Didot fils, chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur. Paris : 1819. 8vo. pp. 80.

In the preface to this very interesting type-specimen book the compiler says:—"I have adopted the numerical order for the identification of my types, in place of the meaningless and often absurd names preserved up to the present day in nearly all the printing-offices. These names, such as *Perle, Parisienne, Nompareille, Mignonne, Petit texte, Gaillarde, Petit romain, Philosophie, Cicéro, Saint Augustin*, &c., offer no idea of the particular proportions of the letters, nor of their relation to others; in fact, they vary in size in different offices. The numerical order, the only one really convenient, was introduced by my father, and the nam of each of his characters is given at the heads of the respective specimens. For about ten consecutive years,—during which I have employed, as nearly as pos-

sible, three hours daily in working with M. Vibert, who is undoubtedly one of the best engravers of letters or punches,—I have been bringing them to perfection. My directions, also, have been carried out with the utmost fidelity, as well as all my ideas for improvements, sometimes resulting in the same fount being cut three or four times over again. It is true that in the industrial arts there is a point where it is necessary to stop. I do not, however, think I have reached it. I propose still to continue to rectify the types and their forms whenever they seem to me susceptible of improvement. I shall leave the same course to my son,—to-day my associate; in a few years, probably, my successor."

DIDOT (Pierre and Jules). Essai d'un nouveau caractère, offrant un Essai lyrique, de P. Didot l'aîné, chevalier de l'ordre royal de Saint Michel, impri-meur du roi et de la Chambre des Pairs. Paris: 1821. 4to. pp. 20.

On the title-page it is stated that this work is issued "chez l'auteur et Jules Didot fils, Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur, rue du Pont de Lodi, no. 6." The type is very beautiful in appearance, the lining, colouring, &c., being exquisite. The new shapes introduced, such as the seriph of the *g*, are, however, not to our taste, and they appear not to have held their position in their native country, for they are now seldom copied. At the end is a notice to publishers calling their attention to the peculiar merits of the founts used.

DIDOT FAMILY (The). Three articles in the *Printing Times and Lithographer*, March, April, May, 1876.

The Didot family has been honourably connected with French typography for a period little short of two centuries, and the following sketches of some of the principal members may be interesting:—

The first of the family who distinguished himself as a literary man was FRANÇOIS DIDOT, born in 1689. He was the son of a Paris merchant, named Denis Didot, and served his apprenticeship to André Pralard, the printer and publisher. He became the intimate friend of the Abbé Prévost, whose works he published. All of these are known to bibliographers for the beauty of their typography. The sign of his establishment was "the Golden Bible." His printing-office was situated successively in the Rue Pavée St. André des Arts, and the Quai des Grands Augustins. He died on the 2nd November, 1757.

FRANÇOIS AMBROISE DIDOT, son of François, was born in Paris, 7th January, 1730, and died 10th July, 1804. He entered upon the publishing business in 1753, and added a printing department to it in 1757. His office was situated in the Rue de Savoie. He may be said to have laid the foundation of the subsequent typographic celebrity of the house. He made great improvements in type-founding, and his founts of type were superior to all that had been produced previously in France. He did not content himself with beautifying the faces of the characters, but put an end in France to the confusion resulting from the non-justification of one founder's type with that of another, by inventing a system of proportioning the sizes of bodies of types to certain normal standards, which he called *points*. He also invented a handpress, which was widely used. He visited all the mills in France, with the view of arriving at a better system of papermaking than prevailed. Afterwards he went to Holland for the same purpose, and there found a workman named Ecrevisse, who assisted him greatly in the improvement of this art. At the suggestion of Didot, and with his practical assistance, the factory of Johannot, at Annonay, produced, in 1780, the first specimen of satin paper (*papier vélin*), in imitation of that on which Baskerville had printed his beautiful quarto edition of Virgil, which was previously only known in England. In 1783, as a mark of royal favour, he was commissioned, under a decree of the king, Louis XVI., to prepare editions of all the books requisite for the education of the Dauphin—a collection of thirty-two volumes in 4to., seventeen in 8vo., and eighteen in 18mo. He printed also for the Count of Artois, afterwards Charles X., a collection of books consisting of sixty-four volumes in 18mo. This series, known as the "Artois edition," is, like the Dauphin edition, very highly prized by bibliophiles. He left the completion of his labours to his two sons, Pierre and Firmin; and after transferring to the first his printing-office, and to the second his foundry, he died in 1804, at the ripe age of 75.

PIERRE FRANÇOIS, second son of François, was a printer, a publisher, and a paper-maker. He was born at Paris, 9th July, 1732, and died 7th December, 1793. He entered into business on his own ac-

count as publisher in 1753, and as printer in 1755. From 1759 to 1789 his establishment was in the Rue des Grands-Augustins, where he published several remarkable editions, among them the "Imitation of Christ," in folio, 1788; "Telemachus," in 4to.; the "Picture of the Ottoman Empire," &c. Pierre F. Didot was printer to Louis XVIII. before he ascended the throne. He devoted himself also to type-founding, in which he effected several useful improvements. His paper-mill, at Essonne, was in its day one of the oldest and most important in France.

HENRI, eldest son of Pierre François, was born 15th July, 1765, and died in 1852. He became famous as a punch-cutter, and for his mechanical skill. At the age of 66 he engraved a fount to which he gave the name of "microscopic," and used it for the editions which he called "the microscopic editions" of the Maxims of Rochefoucault, and of Horace. This fount was a high achievement of the type-founder's art. The minuteness was such that the types could not be cast in the ordinary way; hence he invented a special apparatus, to which he gave the name of the "*polyamatype*," and by means of which they were cast, a hundred letters at a time. These beautiful editions were printed by his brother, Didot jun.

ST. LEGER, second son of Pierre François, was the director of his father's paper-mills at Essonne. It is to this member of the family that we owe the very useful machine for making paper in the web, or in endless rolls. The first attempts in this direction were made at Essonne, in the mill of Pierre François Didot, his father, where Robert, one of his foremen, conceived the first idea of such an apparatus. Many fruitless experiments were made at Essonne by this son and M. Robert, and at Mesnil, near Dreux, under the superintendence of MM. Guillot and Robert. They would have been entirely unproductive but for the perseverance of their employer, who, it may be added, had resided in England at the time of the Peace of Amiens. Fourdrinier had, after an immense expenditure, and after about ten years of labour, got a machine, the first of its kind, in working order at his establishment at Two-Waters. Assisted by Mr. Donkin, St. Leger Didot determined upon developing to its utmost the new invention—one of the most useful and novel of our epoch. In 1816 he returned to France, and at once began to erect machines of this description, originally at Sorel, in the establishment of Messrs. Berthe & Grevenich, afterwards at that of St.-Jean-d'Heurs, belonging to Marshal Oudinot.

PIERRE, grandson of François, and son of François Ambroise, was born 25th January, 1761, and died 31st December, 1853. When his father relinquished printing in 1789, Pierre succeeded him, and devoted himself so successfully to his art, that his press was honoured by being installed in the Louvre, and he himself was created a chevalier of the Order of St. Michael. He wrote, besides the several technical works named above, several translations of the poets, essays, &c Pierre entertained the noble desire to render France as pre-eminent in the arts of peace as she was then invincible in the arts of war, and especially to elevate her Press to the first rank in Europe. In his own efforts he sought to surpass the memorable triumphs of Bodoni. He was already the most eminent printer of France; he aspired to become the most eminent in Europe. Pierrre determined to complete the fine quarto collection of Latin and French classic authors begun for the use of the Dauphin. The most distinguished contemporaneous artists were called in to assist in beautifying the books that were printed: men such as Gérard, Girodet, Prudhon, and Percier. Seconded by his brother in the designing and founding of new characters, Pierre ventured upon his truly national work, the editions known as the "Louvre." Some of these volumes were declared by the jury of the International Exhibition of 1801 the most perfect typographic production of any age. He also published a collection of French classics, dedicated "To the friends of the Typographic Art," which were well worthy of their dedication. To his reputation as a printer Pierre added that of a type-founder; and during ten successive years he had cut or improved under his own eyes, by M. Vibert, no less than eighteen different founts. A medal was struck at Paris in honour of Pierre Didot in 1823. On the obverse is a bust to the right, around which is "Pierre Didot l'aîné typographe Français," and in small characters beneath "Veyrat F." On the reverse is an iron printing-press, against the T of which is "Presse Jules Didot." On the left side of the Presse is the ball-rack, with a pair of pressman's inking-balls. The surrounding legend is "Horace, Virgile, Racine Lafontaine ed^{ons} in-folo"; and in small letters, "Veyrat F. 1823," referring to his *chefs-d'œuvre*.

JULES, son of Pierre, was born 5th August, 1794, and died 18th May, 1871. He may be said to have walked in the steps

of his father, and carried on with great success the business of type-founding. After 1838, however, a painful malady compelled him to renounce his art. He then took to Brussels the materials for establishing, on a large scale, a printing-office and type-foundry, but his enterprise was not successful. He consequently returned to Paris, where he bought a large mansion in the Barrière de Mont-Parnasse, and converted it into a printing-office. He was decorated with the badge of the Legion of Honour. Jules gave to the world many fine editions of French standard books.

FIRMIN, second son of François Ambroise, and brother of Pierre, was born in Paris, 14th April, 1764, and died 24th April, 1836. He was distinguished by his literary taste and his excellence as a printer. The types for several of his father's editions were engraved by him, and his script founts were greatly superior to any that had previously been executed. His Roman characters especially were of great excellence. In 1795 he conceived the plan of consolidating the types which he employed in printing his logarithmic tables, and in pursuing this object he arrived gradually at the stereotyping process. The word *stéréotypie* was, in fact, invented by him. A patent was granted for the invention in 1797. Another patent was granted to him in 1806 for an improved mode of forming script types, and in 1823 a further patent was granted for a new system of executing, in typography, various kinds of maps and charts. After having travelled in Italy, Greece, and Spain, Firmin retired in 1827 from the active superintendence of his great establishment. In 1830 the Government offered him the position of director of the Royal Printing-office, which, however, he declined. He was decorated with the medal of the Legion of Honour, and appointed Printer to the King and to the French Institute. The Government had his bust in marble placed in one of the halls of the Imperial Printing-office, and a medal in his honour was struck after his death. His portrait, painted by his friend Girodet, is hung in the gallery of the Louvre. A medal was struck at Paris in honour of Firmin Didot in 1839. On the obverse is a bust, nearly full face; to the right, in modern costume, with the name on either side in bold letters: "Firmin Didot." On the reverse is a heavy wreath of laurel-leaves, tied at foot with a ribbon, within which is the inscription—"Stephanorum Aemulus musarum cultor." In 1806 he published a translation, of which he was the author, of the Bucolics of Virgil. The book is interesting from a typographical point of view, not only because of its being translated by the printer, but because the latter also engraved and cast the types. It is also remarkable for the use of the character called "Anglaise," which appeared for the first time in the dedication of the book to Pierre Didot, the author's elder brother. The volume concludes with a long bibliographical and typographical note. He also printed M. Brun's "Manuel de Typographie Française" (Paris: 1825), a masterpiece of printing, and possessing the peculiarity of not containing a single divided word.

AMBROISE FIRMIN, the son of Firmin, and a great-grandson of the founder of the house, was born at Paris on December 20th, 1790. He died February 22nd, 1876, in his eighty-sixth year. In 1814, on the establishment of peace, Ambroise Firmin-Didot determined to visit England, with a view to ascertain the progress made in this country in regard to the arts of printing and paper-making. The knowledge he acquired by this journey led to his being the first to introduce into France the iron press invented by Lord Stanhope and named after him. In 1823 he resided in Greece, and to his initiative was due the establishment of the "Comité Grec." In 1827 Ambroise Firmin Didot entered upon the management of his father's establishment, in conjunction with his brother, Hyacinthe Didot, under the partnership name of Firmin-Didot frères. M. Ambroise Firmin Didot, like several of his predecessors, distinguished himself as a punch-cutter and type-founder. He introduced two new founts, one being what he called "English cursive" and the other an improved Greek. Much to his regret, he had to sell to the Société de la Fonderie Générale that branch of his business which was connected with type-founding. His works, however, remained the most complete in France, and were, perhaps, the only office where all the branches of printing and its many ramifications were conducted under one head; for it embraced not only publishing and printing, but paper-making, on the largest scale. The mills are situated at Mesnil, near Dreux, and at Sorel (Eure-et-Loire), where the processes are conducted in the most approved manner In conjunction with his brother Hyacinthe, he published a number of magnificent works; among them the "Univers Pittoresque," the "Encyclopédie Moderne," and the "Dictionnaire de Conversation et de Lecture." One of

AMBROISE FIRMIN DIDOT, 1790–1876.

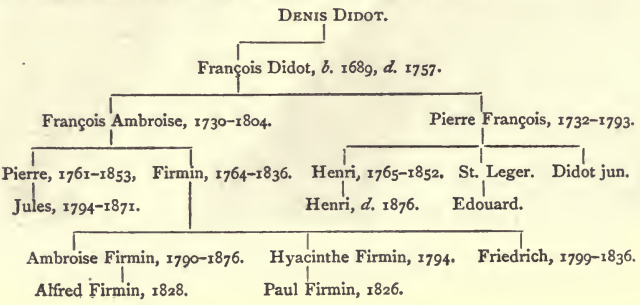
the best-known works of the firm was the "Nouvelle Biographie Générale," edited by Dr. Hoefer, which was begun in 1853 and finished in 1866, forming in itself a small library of 46 volumes. At the French Exhibitions of 1844 and 1849, as a member of the jury, he was charged with the compilation of a report on all the industries connected with typography. In 1851, by the unanimous wish of the international jury, he was selected to draw up a similar report concerning the first Great Exhibition at London. This report, printed at the Imperial Printing-office, forms a comprehensive and sagacious review of the condition of the art of printing all over the world at the time of its compilation. It is even more than this, for it gives a *résumé* of the past history of typography, lithography, &c., and some suggestions of great value as to their future progress. He also wrote the "Essay on Typography," the address to the French Readers' Society, and the "Treatise on Wood-engraving," besides the important work on Aldus Manutius. In fact, he was at once a designer and engraver of types, a publisher, and a typographer; a member since 1827 of the Chamber of Commerce, and since 1832 of the Council of Manufactures. Since 1848 he had been a member of the Municipal Council of Paris. At all the Exhibitions his establishment obtained gold medals. He was the honorary president of the Paris Publishers, Printers, and Paper-makers' Club. Decorated with the order of the Legion of Honour in 1825, he was named as an officer 13th November, 1860. He succeeded his father as printer to the Institute of France in 1855. It may therefore be said, with the strictest justice, that he was worthily regarded as the personal embodiment of the honour and glory of the printing profession in France. He was also, in every respect, a "learned printer," and in correspondence with the principal *savants* of his time. He travelled extensively, and was known as an eminent philo-Hellenist. Our space does not permit of our further naming his achievements in literature, arts, and science. In addition to his exceptionally fine collection of engravings, the catalogues relating to which are cited above, M. Didot left a magnificent library.

Alfred Firmin is the son of Ambroise. He was born in 1828, and is a well-known *littérateur*, as well as a printer. He translated from the Greek, in 1852, "Les Fragments inédits de Nicolas de Damas," recently discovered, and comprised in the Didots' "Bibliothèque Grecque."

Hyacinthe is the younger brother of Ambroise Firmin-Didot, and was born in 1794, and educated at the college of St. Barbe. Since 1857 he has been the director of the Didot printing-office. He is a Chevalier of the Legion of Honour, member of the Municipal Council of the Eure, and discharges various municipal offices.

Paul Firmin is the son of Hyacinthe. He was born in 1826, and has devoted much attention to chemical investigations, with the view of improving the manufacture of paper. He published in 1855, jointly with M. Barruel, "Un nouveau Mode de Blanchiment des Chiffons et des Plantes textiles, par l'adjonction du gaz acide carbonique," in 8vo. This is a work which led to several improvements in the processes of paper-making, especially in the bleaching of rags and of paper-stuff made from fibrous plants.

In order that the reader may the more readily understand the relationship of the various members of the Didots, we here insert a family Pedigree.



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